IN THE HIGH COURT OF GUJARAT AT AHMEDABAD

FIRST APPEAL No 441 of 2003
to
FIRST APPEALNo 444 of 2003

with

CIVIL APPLICATION No 1174 to 1177 of 2003

HON'BLE MR.JUSTICE KSHITIJ R.VYAS

and

HON'BLE MR.JUSTICE K.S.JHAVERI

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1. Whether Reporters of Local Papers may be allowed to see the judgements? : NO

2. To be referred to the Reporter or not? : NO

3. Whether Their Lordships wish to see the fair copy of the judgement? : NO

4. Whether this case involves a substantial question of law as to the interpretation of the Constitution of India, 1950 of any Order made thereunder? : NO

5. Whether it is to be circulated to the concerned Magistrate/Magistrates,Judge/Judges,Tribunal/Tribunals? : NO

PROJECT MANAGER OIL & NATURAL GAS CORP.LTD.
Versus
STATE OF GUJARAT

Appearance:
MR AJAY R MEHTA for Petitioner No. 1
MR K.L. PANDYA, AGP for Respondent No. 1-2
MR GM AMIN for Respondent No. 3

CORAM : HON'BLE MR.JUSTICE KSHITIJ R.VYAS

and

HON'BLE MR.JUSTICE K.S.JHAVERI

Date of decision: 09/03/2004

ORAL JUDGEMENT

(Per : HON'BLE MR.JUSTICE KSHITIJ R.VYAS)

1. The above-numbered four appeals were ordered to be admitted vide order dated April 28, 2003. Mr. K.L. Pandya, learned AGP, appears on behalf of the respondent nos.1 and 2 i.e. State of Gujarat and Special Land Acquisition Officer, ONGC Campus, Khambhat, Kheda, whereas Mr. G.M. Amin, learned advocate, appears on behalf of the respondent no.3 i.e. the original claimants in each appeal. Having regard to the facts of the case and in view of joint request of the learned advocates of the parties, the appeals are taken up for final disposal today.

2. By filing the above-numbered appeals under Section 54 of the Land Acquisition Act and Section 96 of the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, the appellant has challenged legality of common judgement and award dated July 16, 2002, rendered by the learned Civil Judge (S.D.), Anand, in Land Acquisition Reference Nos.992 of 1991 to 995 of 1991, by which the appellant and the respondent nos.1 and 2 are ordered to pay additional compensation of Rs.25/- per sq.. mt. for the lands acquired over and above the compensation of Rs.2.45 per sq. mtr. offered by the Land Acquisition Officer by his award dated March 30, 1991.

3. A proposal was received by the State Government to acquire lands situated in village Jantral, Taluka Borsad, District Kheda for public purpose of Drillsite EPS of Oil and Natural Gas Commission. On receipt of the proposal, the State Government was satisfied that the lands situated in village Jantral were likely to be needed for the said public purpose. Therefore, notification under Section 4 of the Land Acquisition Act, 1894 ("the Act" for short) was issued, which was published in official gazette on November 24, 1988. The owners of the lands had objected to the acquisition. After considering the objections, necessary report was forwarded to the State Government as contemplated by Section 5-A(2) of the Act. On perusal of the said report, the State Government was satisfied that the lands which were specified in the notification published under Section 4 of the Act were needed for public purpose of Drillsite EPS of Oil and Natural Gas Commission. Therefore, declaration under Section 6 of the Act was

made which was also published in the official gazette on June 28, 1990. Thereafter, notices were served on the owners of the lands under Section 9 of the Act for determination of compensation. The claimants had appeared before the Land Acquisition Officer and claimed compensation at the rate of Rs.30/- per sq. mtr. However, having regard to the nature of the lands acquired and the development in the area, the Land Acquisition Officer had offered compensation to the claimants at the rate of Rs.2.45 per sq. mtr. by his award dated March 30, 1991. The claimants were of the view that determination of compensation by the Land Acquisition Officer was not proper and had, therefore, accepted the award under protest. By filing applications, they had requested the Special Land Acquisition Officer to refer the matters to the Court for determination of adequate compensation. Accordingly, references were made to the District Court, Kheda which were registered as Land Acquisition Reference Nos.992 of 1991 to 995 of 1991. The case of the claimants was that the lands acquired were forming part of a developing area and as they were fertile and claimants were reaping harvest for three seasons, they were entitled to higher compensation. What was claimed by them was that the lands acquired were near Nadiad and Anand cities and, therefore, more compensation should be paid to them. The reference applications were contested by the appellant and the respondent nos.1 and 2. According to them, before determining the market value of the lands acquired, the Special Land Acquisition Officer had taken into consideration fertility of the lands, income derived by the claimants etc., and, therefore, reference applications should be dismissed.

4. Having regard to the rival contentions of the parties, necessary issues for determination were raised by the reference Court. On behalf of the claimants, Mr. Purshottam Maganbhai Patel, who is one of the claimants, was examined, and he had given particulars such as location of lands acquired, date on which notification under Section 4 of the Act was published in the official gazette, date on which declaration under Section 5 of the Act was made, etc. According to him, the claimants were reaping three crops in a year and as they were deriving substantial income from the sale of agricultural produce, they were entitled to compensation at the rate of Rs.30/per sq. mtr.. He had also produced copies of Village Form No.7/12 along with list at Exh.23. The Reference Court accepted the evidence tendered on behalf of the claimants and recorded a finding that the claimants are entitled to compensation at the rate of

Rs.27.45 per sq. mtr. by judgement and award dated July 16, 2002, which has given rise to above numbered appeals.

5. The main contention, which is raised by Mr. Ajay R. Mehta, learned Advocate of the appellant, is that without any basis whatsoever, the reference Court has come to the conclusion that the claimants are entitled to additional compensation at the rate of Rs.25/- per sq. mtr. over and above the compensation determined by the Land Acquisition Officer and as no reasons have been given for coming to the conclusion that the claimants are entitled to additional compensation at the rate of Rs.25/- per sq. mtr., the appeals should be allowed. Mr. G.M. Amin, learned advocate of the claimants, has fairly stated that no reasons have been assigned by the reference Court for awarding additional compensation at the rate of Rs. 25/- per sq. mtr.

6. We have considered the submissions made at the Bar and evidence adduced by the parties. A bare reading of impugned award makes it evident that no reasons are assigned by the reference Court for awarding additional/enhanced compensation. As reasons have not been assigned by the reference Court while determining additional compensation at the rate of Rs.25/- per sq. mtr. this Court is of the view that the appeals deserve to be accepted and matters should be remanded to the competent Court for redetermination of compensation payable to the claimants.

7. For the foregoing reasons, the appeals succeed. Judgement and award dated July 16, 2002 rendered by the learned Civil Judge (S.D.), Nadiad in Land Acquisition Reference Nos.992 of 1991 to 995 of 1991 is hereby set aside. The matters are remitted to the competent court for redetermination of compensation payable to the claimants on merits. It is clarified that the claimants would be entitled to adduce evidence before the reference Court in support of their claim that they are entitled to compensation at the higher rate, and the appellant and respondent nos.1 and 2 would be entitled to refute the same. Having regard to the facts and circumstances of the case, the reference Court is directed to decide the references afresh as early as possible and preferably within three months from the date of receipt of the writ. The amount deposited by the appellant in the reference Court pursuant to order passed by the Division Bench on April 28, 2003, shall remain with the reference Court till the references are decided afresh. R & P called, be sent to the reference Court immediately. The appeals are allowed to the extent indicated hereinabove. There shall

be no orders as to costs.

8. Since the appeals have been disposed of, the above Civil Applications do not survive and are accordingly disposed of.

[KSHITIJ R. VYAS, J.]

[K.S. JHAVERI, J.]